

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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The attached is a letter from Averill Harriman on the subject of Berlin. After drafting it he decided that it might be out of line for him to send it on to you; but I think it is worth your attention anyway.

Arthur Schlesinger

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DRAFT

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September 1, 1961

Dear Mr. President:

I have never been a good back-seat driver, and that's the reason for this letter.

Twenty years ago this month President Roosevelt sent me to Moscow on the Anglo-American supply mission, with Lord Beaverbrook representing the British. That started me on a long series of discussions and negotiations with Stalin which lasted over nearly five years and gave me the opportunity to see him at close range, probably more than any other Western representative. I attended the several bilateral talks between Churchill and Stalin, as well as the tripartite discussions. Naturally, it gave me also the opportunity to see the Kremlin at close range. Through my later responsibilities, I was able to follow the development of post-war Germany, NATO, Korean War, etc., at close range. This experience made it possible for me to project with some accuracy Stalin's behavior, and provided the background from which to judge later Kremlin policies. I have found that I haven't always been wrong, and that gives me the temerity to write you on the present complicated situation.

Frankly, it is my firm belief that a satisfactory deal can be made with Khrushchev over West Berlin, improving our present position.

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BY BLH NARS, DATE 1/30/79

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Let me hasten to say that no one is more convinced than I that we must maintain the freedom of the people of West Berlin, the Western position in Berlin, freedom of access, present relationship between West Germany and West Berlin, etc. -- but I do not believe that we are entirely happy in our present arrangements. At present, although of course we do not admit it, the right of civilian access to Berlin is not legally beyond question. I have failed to understand why in 1949, when the negotiations for the renewal of access were concluded after the airlift, we did not insist on improving our access rights. But that's another story.

I believe that we can now improve our general position and contribute to more peaceful relationships in Europe if we seize this opportunity to attain desirable objectives and if we handle ourselves with skill and flexibility. There are a few sine qua non's on both sides. I have stated ours above, and as to Khrushchev, he intends to sign a peace treaty with East Germany and he wants to create greater stability in East Germany. Except for that, there is considerable flexibility in his position. I believe, however, that we will have to accept an arrangement with the East Germans, guaranteed by Russia, for Berlin access (clearer than we now have). This means some sort of de facto recognition, or at least acceptance of the existence of the East German regime. Since Potsdam, I have been satisfied that Germany would be divided for a long time. I am sure Khrushchev means what he says when he told me as well as others that "We would never agree to a

united Germany under socialism (as he calls it) and I will never agree to a united Germany under your system." Today, West Germany has in fact given de facto recognition to East Germany, with its several hundred agreements. Adenauer expects us to keep him respectable by our adamant refusal to deal with East Germany. In spite of this, Dulles conceded two or three points in regard to the acceptance of the East German regime, without obtaining anything in exchange. I know Adenauer and other German politicians may make difficulties, but in the last analysis, will have to accept our de facto recognition or acceptance of the reality of the East German regime, providing, of course, we make it clear that we have in mind steps towards the ultimate objective of a unified Germany.

If we carry on our discussions with Khrushchev in a broader context, I am satisfied we will find he wants acceptance of the Oder-Niese line. For my part, I believe this is equally advantageous to us as to him to settle that border dispute and not leave it open for future dangerous political exploitation. Obviously, this will also increase our opportunity of improving our relationships as time goes on with Poland and other Eastern European countries who still fear German aggression.

In addition, I believe Khrushchev is sincerely concerned over the re-militarization of Germany, and particularly with the prospect of her eventually getting independent nuclear capability. I know Stalin was concerned about the future military strength of Germany. I know the

Russian people are. Two years ago, wherever I went in Russia (including some places no American had gone before), one of the two principal questions I was asked was, "Why do you arm Germany against us?"

On the one hand, Khrushchev talks about reducing Germany to cinders with four nuclear bombs; on the other, he talks about the dangers from a re-militarized Germany. He feels Adenauer is safe enough, but he said to me, "What will happen if Strauss or someone else gets control?"

For my part, I believe it is of very great importance to the security of the United States to prevent Germany from having independent nuclear capability. I am opposed to a de-militarized neutral Germany. I believe Germany may become dangerous unless she is scrambled into the Western European political, economic and military community. But I consider it would be a real protection to us if the present understanding that Germany will never produce her own nuclear weapons be made part of an international agreement including the Soviet Union.

I have watched Germany's increased military independence grow from the original plan to integrate certain units in a European army under the E.D.C., into a separate military force. She will have the strongest army in Europe, and who can stop her if some leader determines that she shall produce her own nuclear weapons?

I firmly believe that West Germany is an essential part of Western Europe, politically, economically, and militarily. Without her Western Europe is an eggshell. Western Germany gives it essential depth and

strength. The dreams we had of Western European economic union are coming closer and closer to achievement. This will mean the development of a very strong third power in the world, closely associated with the United States, which with us can offset the power of the Soviet Union and China for many years to come. But I believe that our long-term interest can be advanced if we use the present occasion to come to an agreement with the Soviet Union for a denuclearized control zone of West Germany and East Germany to as far East as can be negotiated or perhaps an agreement that no additional European country, either East or West, should obtain independent nuclear capability. This is one step towards arms limitation, but more than that, protects us against the possibility of Germany's getting independent nuclear capability with which she could blackmail both West and East. Such an agreement would be a great achievement for Khrushchev to bring back to his people. He is a politician and depends for his great authority upon public good will, at least to a limited extent.

There are a number of other subjects that have to be weighed, but to me these are three of the most important. For my part, I believe we can improve our position and yet reach an agreement with Khrushchev. His face must, of course, be saved. He obviously does not want a nuclear war, and has not given any indication so far that he thinks that he can destroy us without having Russia subjected to unacceptable devastation in retaliation.